**Decade of the WGDAW**

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1. As founding members of the WGDAW, we sought to establish an ongoing agenda, which would transform women’s realities by addressing the intertwined aspects of their lives: political, economic, family and health. We regarded the achievement of equality in all these areas as interdependent. We did not consider it feasible to promote women’s equal participation in political and economic life, without securing women's rights to equality in all aspects of family life, to freedom from GBV and to sexual and reproductive freedoms.

In this Eleanor Roosevelt’s words inaugurating the UDHR after WWII, have particular resonance: “Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood s/he lives in; the school or college s/he attends; the factory, farm, or office where s/he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination.”

1. This brings me to your question, Liz, regarding resistance to our recommendations. We encountered little resistance to our recommendations on the need to promote equal opportunity in the political and economic spheres or in the fight to end GBV but we did encounter considerable resistance to our insistence on equality for women in the family and on their right to sexual and reproductive freedoms.
2. In the area of women’s political lives, we had identified a revolutionary entry of women into political representation in parliaments, reaching a global average of 25%, a phenomenon which has been dubbed gender democracy. However, we noted that discrimination persisted and recommended that women’s political representation needed the continuing support of quota systems.
3. As regards women’s economic lives, we observed that equal opportunity measures globally have been largely addressed to women in formal employment, but women’s and girls’ economic reality is also determined through informal work, entrepreneurship, family allocation of resources and unpaid care work. In all these contexts, infrastructures remain unfriendly to women and policy solutions are scarce. The WEF said in 2018 that, while the gender gap will be closed in a hundred years, the economic gender gap will not be closed for 257 years, more than twice as long. We recommended the inclusion of women and integration of a gender perspective at the highest levels of macro-economic policy making.
4. It was our report on the family that moved us into politically contested territory. Although patriarchal family hierarchies persist globally, the clear IHRL guarantee of equality for women and men in the family has been secured in legislation in secular countries. It has, however, been rejected in the legal regimes of theocratic states and by religious courts in plural legal systems. We considered that the right of women and girls to equality in the family must be enacted and implemented in all family law systems, without discrimination, including on grounds of conservative traditional values or religious freedom. This recommendation was incorporated by the HRC in its annual resolution.

However, concurrently, conservative resistance to the insistence on women's right to equality in the family resulted in a separate development in the Council in which women’s right to equality was omitted from a Resolution on the Protection of the Family. Representing the WG, I sought and gained the support of the Coordinating Committee of Special Procedures in calling on the Council to reaffirm women's longstanding right to equality in the family, going back to the UDHR.

1. In the area of health, we called for an end to the politicization of women’s bodies and called for recognition of women’s right to terminate a pregnancy, by women's autonomous choice in the first trimester and, after that, on wide health and social grounds, respecting individual woman's decisions. Medical services for legal terminations must be accessible and affordable. Our policy paper was groundbreaking in drawing together the tentative progress that had been made in various human rights mechanisms. However, women's sexual and reproductive rights remain an area in which there is fierce resistance by conservative lobbies and progress in state policies is patchy and in some cases deteriorating.
2. Together with examining the underlying infrastructure of women’s and girls’ disadvantage, we focused on the way in which various kinds of crisis affect the realization of state obligation to bring about equality. Our work on the impact of crisis on women’s human rights is highly relevant to the current health crisis in the Covid 19 pandemic.

The pandemic has set economic woman back in a way even more serious than the 2008 financial crisis, which we surveyed in our 2014 report. In Covid lockdowns, women have been disparately burdened with the highly intensified maintenance of households and care functions; there has been a horrifying increase in the number of women and children suffering from domestic violence; there have been disparate barriers of access to termination of pregnancy and medical contraception, in some states on the grounds that they are non-essential services.

# On a personal note, the intensive six years of work with five members of the WG and the wonderful staff who accompanied us has left me with a precious legacy of sisterhood.

# Our personal, professional and regional diversity lent depth to a shared perception of what gender justice should look like for women and girls everywhere. We advocated for the adoption of this consensus, rather than making ex priori diplomatic compromises and the feedback from states to our frank submissions on these issues was not always one of agreement but it was always supportive and respectful.

We sought to balance the ongoing deficit in the realization of women’s equality with the gains made. We retained optimism derived from the paradigmatic recognition of women’s rights as human rights, from the good practices of states and especially from the robust commitment of women’s human rights defenders.

# The work on women’s and girls’ equal justice, equal, opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination is a work in progress. I hope our generation has passed on to younger generations the vision and the tools to forge the equal partnership between women and men which will enable and empower them to meet the unprecedented challenges, for individuals, families, communities and states, which lie ahead.